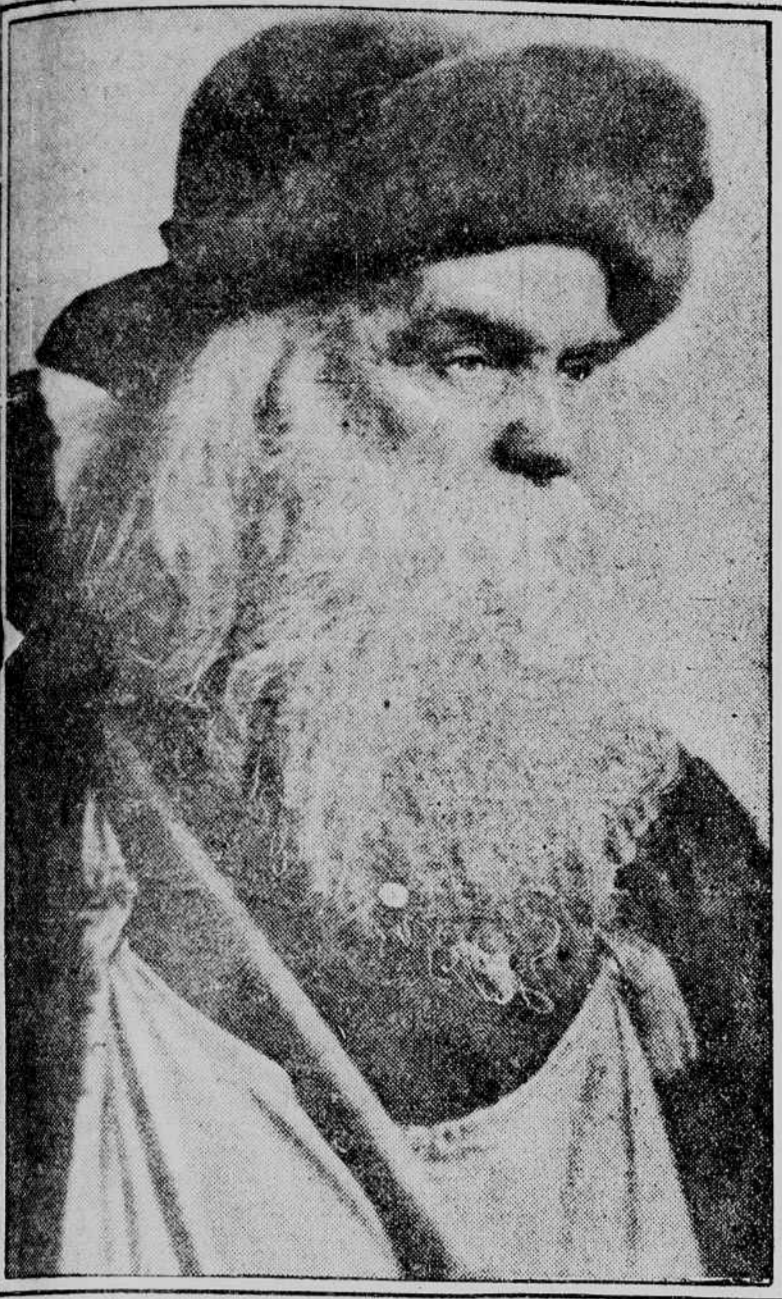


SANTA CLAUS LIVES, BUT HIS DOUBLE IS DEAD

Paul B. Mnason, Whose Snow-framed Features Smiled at Thousands of Children, Will Pose No More. Man of Mystery, He Once Led a Religious Sect Called the Angel Dancers

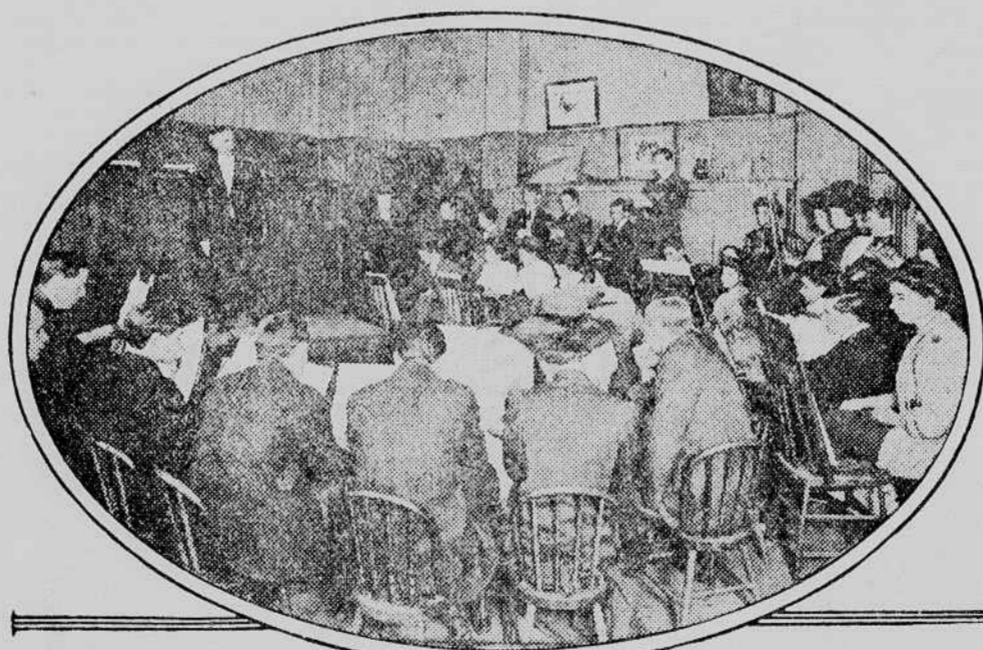
By ARTHUR CHAPMAN



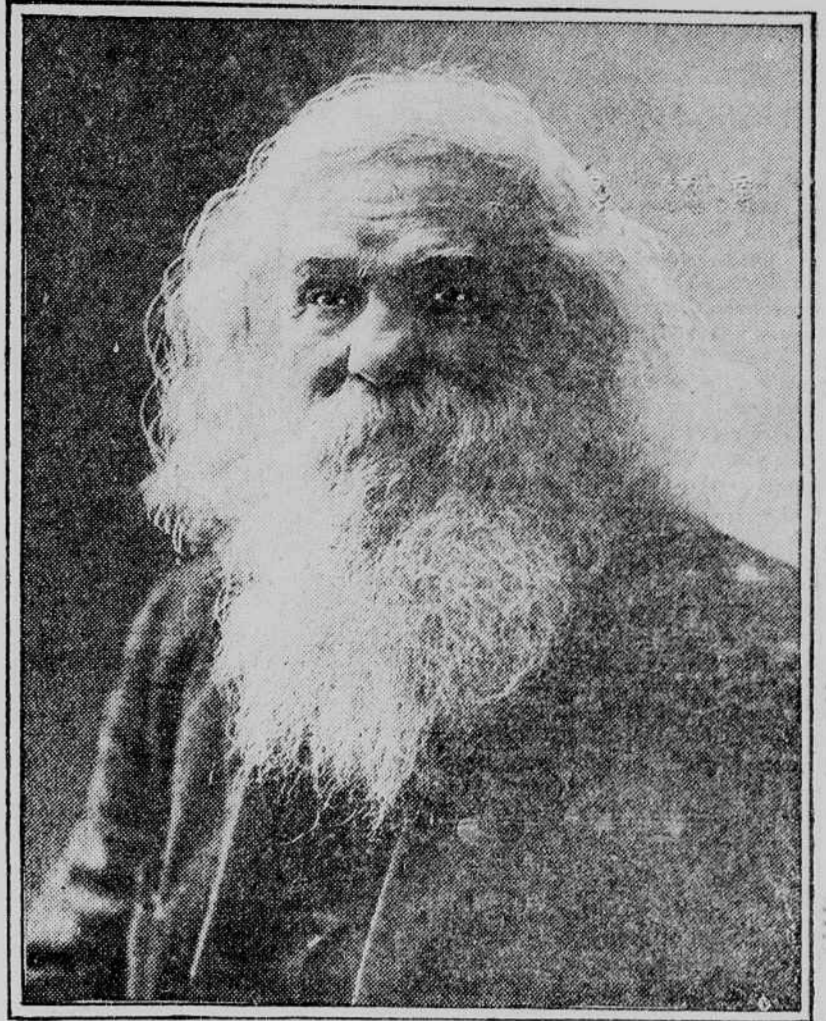
Mnason in a pose reminiscent of his "Lord's Farm" days



"Line's Busy"—a Christmas drawing by Orson Lowell for which Mnason posed. Reprinted by courtesy of the editor of "Judge"



Classroom of the Art Students' League, where "Santa Claus" worked as a model and where he died



He was Santa, he was a sea captain, he was King Lear

THE man who was Santa Claus is dead. He was a man of many names, but at the Art Students' League, where he posed for beginners, and in the studios of the best known artists, where he was sent for when a "Santa Claus type" was needed, he was known as Mnason, the first "n" being silent.

Over in Jersey City, where Mnason lived, the children in the neighborhood are still sorrowing because "Santa Claus" is gone. They used to call "Hello, Santa Claus," after him when they saw him on the street, and they would say "Now, don't forget to send me that doll for Christmas." Or perhaps it was a sled or bicycle, or whatever else happened to be foremost in the mind of the child. And the man who was Santa Claus would always promise to send whatever they asked.

"He said that American parents always got their children whatever the children wanted," said Mnason's landlady, a motherly woman in whose house the Santa Claus model had lived for ten years. "Such being the case, he did not hesitate to promise the children whatever they asked for. If he had thought they might be disappointed he never would have made a promise, as he was fond of children. Hardly a day passed that he did not come home with one or two children by the hand."

Huntsman T. Mnason, or Mnason T. Huntsman, or Madison T. Huntsman, or Paul B. Mnason, as he had been known at various times in his career, probably had his picture reproduced more times than any other man. In art circles he was famous as the type that meant bearded joviality. Santa Claus was his chief subject in later years, when his beard had become snowy. Artists say there never has been another Santa Claus like Mnason. They drew and painted him as Santa Claus for magazine covers, posters, subway advertisements, illustrations for stories and for genre paintings. They found him the ideal type, on account of his snowy beard, his bearing, the jolly twinkle in his eyes, his fine color and his intelligence. Also his hands. Orson Lowell, who drew Mnason many times as Santa Claus, says he had the hands that went with the type—hands that expressed character.

At the Art Students' League, in West Fifty-seventh Street, where Mnason had often posed and where he was stricken with a fatal attack of heart disease, he found almost constant employment as a model. Miss Margaret Mesereau, the secretary of the league, showed some recent pictures made of Mnason by students, some of them showing him as Santa Claus. One showed him as a sea captain telling some story of the sea to a little boy with a boat. He made an excellent sea captain. He also posed as King Lear. In fact, he seemed to fit almost any character that called for a snowy beard, but Santa Claus was his best bet, and he knew it and the children knew it and the artists knew it.

Mnason fell dead at the Art Students' League one week ago last Thursday, almost when he answered "All right" to some student's inquiry about his health. He had left home as usual early in the morning. His landlady said she did not see him go, but a neighbor waved at him and Mnason waved back. It was his habit to leave the house early in the morning to "get out of the way," he put it.

"I offered him a room in my house ten years ago," said his landlady, "because I believed him to be in need. My husband, who was a railroad man, had met with an accident and had been compelled to seek other work. I decided to let out a room or two, and that was when Mr. Mnason came to us. He helped around the house at any little work that he could do. He was a vegetarian. In fact, he had such pronounced ideas on the subject that, if he would go to the store for us and get

bread or anything of that sort, he would not go to the butcher's and get meat. Of late, he had been talking about going to France to see a boy he had raised. The boy is now twenty-one years old. I used to see letters that he sent to Mr. Mnason in earlier years—very affectionate letters."

Mnason was seventy-four years old last December. He was buried in Scranton, Pa., near his birthplace, a niece at Morris Plains, N. J., having claimed the body.

When he was posing occasionally the model for Santa Claus would hint to his artist friends regarding certain experiences in his life in which his pronounced and individualistic religious views played a part. It was a delight to talk on religious subjects. In fact, one Christmas season when he had been hired by a New York department store to dress up as Santa Claus and receive the messages of the little folk who flocked to the toy department it was said the engagement proved to be short lived, because Mnason had "talked religion" to customers.

The files of New York newspapers of an earlier day contain many articles about Mnason, whose activities as head of a religious sect in New Jersey involved him in difficulties with his neighbors and even got him into the courts. The Angel Dancers, or the Church of the Living God, was what Mnason called his sect. He put the "n" into his name because in the Bible (Acts xxi, 16) there is the following reference:

"There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge."

For almost a score of years Mnason, who called himself "The Holy One," was the center of bitter controversy. He and a group of his followers, men and women, lived on what they called the "Lord's farm" in the Pascack section of northern New Jersey. In 1909 he and his followers were evicted from the farm, after which Mnason disappeared for several years, to reappear in New York as an art model.

A War Memorial Dedicated to the Boy Who Needs a Home

JUST such a memorial as soldiers killed in the war might have themselves chosen is being planned for them in New York City. It is not monument, triumphal arch or statue. It is that which holds within itself an inspiration greater than all of these might give to the millions who view them. By this memorial the memory of a patriot who gave his life for his country may mold the characters and lives of American boys.

"That a man's name and influence may not die with him, but continue as an inspiration and example to those who follow."

The memorial is to take the form of a large building, a definite section or unit of which may be given in memory of some relative or friend. It is to be devoted entirely to working boys from sixteen to nineteen years old, and

as near as it can it is to mean "home" for the New York City boys whose homes may have been broken up by death or misfortune or for the out-of-town boy who comes to New York to make his business start.

Enshrined in each room is to be the picture of the man in whose memory it was given. Inscribed below will be his record in war, or it may be his achievements in his business or professional career, for not only soldiers are to be honored in the building. Thus will be set before growing boys high ideals which will seem to them very near and real and worthy of aspiration.

Such an endowment is not, of course, a novel scheme; hospitals, college buildings and so forth have been erected under it. But none of them has filled a more pressing need. And the boys' building will have such an opportunity as no

other place would for presenting those reminders from the lives of great men which can mean so much to lads.

The building is to be erected by the West Side Y. M. C. A. by means of its own contribution and the memorial subscriptions. It is to be half a mile from the property of the West Side Y, at Fifty-seventh Street and Eighth Avenue. Besides the dormitory feature there will be space for social, educational and athletic uses. The memorial will cost \$500,000.

Memorial gifts to endow rooms have been given in honor of the following: Lieutenant Marshall Peabody, killed with the "Lost Battalion," given by George M. Bodman; Lieutenant Harold Imbrie, Princeton, '00, died at Kelly Field, given by Philip Le Boutillier; Edward C. Moen, Harvard, '91, given by his brother, A. Rene Moen; William C. Wolverton, given

and sold them. Wayfarers were welcome at the "Lord's farm," and hoboes soon learned the way there and ate many a free meal, with no greater penalty than hearing Mnason expound his radical doctrines.

There were protests on the part of neighbors, and Mnason was even tarred and feathered and ducked in ice water. But he was an apostle of non-resistance even in those days so far ahead of the great war, and all such "mere incidents" did not have the desired effect of making him quit the community.

Bergen County authorities conducted an investigation of the "Lord's farm" in 1893. There were twenty-eight followers of Mnason on the farm, nine of them long-haired men, seventeen women and two children. Biblical names abounded, some of them being "John the Baptist," "Silas the Pure," "Titus" (Garrett Storms), "Thecla" (Mrs. Jane Howell), "Poebe" (Mary Storms) and "The Holy One," who was Mnason himself. Indictments followed, and all but Mary Storms, who has since died, were found guilty. Only Mnason and Mrs. Howell were sentenced. They were sent to state prison for a year.

After serving his prison sentence, Mnason returned to the "Lord's farm," which he continued to run for several years. Occasionally he broke into the public prints, owing to some "preachment" or some threatened investigation. But apparently the hold of Mnason on his followers was slipping. "Titus"

Storms turned on him. "John the Baptist," whose real name was John McClintock, committed suicide, and in October, 1909, Mnason was legally ejected from the farm under the landlord and tenant act. It was then that he dropped from sight until, several years later, with his hair and beard snow white, he appeared in New York City as a model, and specialized as "Santa Claus." Apparently he had given over all idea of re-establishing a religious colony. He wrote verse which was on religious topics, and he lost no opportunity to set forth his ideas on religion to any one who might be inclined to listen, but for the most part his time was occupied making the rounds of the studios, generally at the request of artists who had Santa Claus pictures to make and who now are bereft because they declare that nowhere in New York or its environs is to be found such another model for the patron saint of Christmas.

"There is no type more difficult to find than the venerable old man type—particularly the sort with a sparkle of humor, which Mnason had," said a well known artist. "It is no trouble to get old men, of course. There are plenty of them to be seen on the streets and in the parks. Not all of them would pose, even if asked—but there are few we would want under any circumstances. A model may have the flowing white beard, the long white bushy locks and the generous girth of an ideal Santa Claus. He may have the ruddy glow of health in his cheeks, but when it comes to painting such a model, he lacks the something necessary to make a vital picture."

"Probably it is because few of us reach old age without bearing evidences of some of the hard knocks we have received. We may try to hide it under a brave front. We may have a ready enough laugh, and perhaps we are classed as cheerful, but something furtive will show in our eyes in spite of ourselves. Or, there may be lines in the face which we simply cannot hide. Get those lines under a studio skylight and they are the first thing an artist sees. In youth or middle age it may be possible for a neartype to get by, but when it comes to old age the model must stand every test."

"Santa Claus, as most people have him treasured in the imagination, isn't just a commonplace old fellow, ready with a grin. Not at all. He lives up to the immortal description in 'The Night Before Christmas.' The picture of Santa Claus that always sticks in my mind is one that I got out of a short story in 'St. Nicholas,' written by Washington Gladden, back when I was a boy."

"An artist could almost draw a picture of that sort of Santa Claus without a model. I say 'almost' because he'd probably be hunting around for a model before he finished. And right there his troubles would begin. If he'd hunted for a few weeks and then, just about when he'd given up, he should hear a knock on the door and there would stand Mnason, bowing and smiling his Santa Claus smile, you can imagine just what sort of a reception the applicant would get."

"It's no exaggeration to say that Mnason posed for most of the Santa Claus pictures that have been made in recent years. And he figured in a good many for which he did not actually pose—as such pictures have been copied from originals for which Mnason was the model. Probably there isn't a man today whose picture has been cut out more times and is treasured in more scrapbooks. And when you figure magazine covers, advertisements and pamphlets, as well as illustrations for Christmas stories and verse, you can see that there is no end of demand for a Santa Claus type. Incidentally, this is the busy season for such a model, as the illustrators who make Santa Claus covers and such things generally do their work when they are thinking about getting the price of a summer vacation out of their Christmas orders."

It was generally felt in the studios that Mnason was a "man of mystery." Outside of the few hints he volunteered as to his early life, little was known of him. Even the newspaper history of his career seemed to be incomplete. Questioning only made him more reserved. Nothing could dampen his cheerfulness, but behind his smile there was an element of mystery which the embodiment of Santa Claus maintained to the last.